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THE DUTY  
OF THE  
SCHOLAR TO THE STATE.

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ORATION:

Delivered at Burlington College, New Jersey.

FEBRUARY 22, 1873.

BY

*W. W. MONTGOMERY, ESQ.*

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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# THE DUTY

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### SCHOLAR TO THE STATE.



In this country we celebrate but two yearly holidays in commemoration of national events. One, as is natural, the day from which we claim to mark our existence as a Nation: the other the birthday of one whose life and actions are so intimately connected with our early history, and whose influence upon the events of the day was so great and of such a character, that our fathers, who knew him and loved him, felt his birth to have been a blessing to his native land, and worthy of commemoration as such.

As Washington's Birthday comes round year after year, marked (save in such observances as bring us together here to-day), by no special customs or ceremonies throughout the land, and occurring at the season of the year of all others least suited to holiday festivity, is not the veneration which all the people once had for the character of the *Pater Patriæ*, slowly becoming less sincere, and our love for his memory weakening? We even see petty anecdotes raked up, illustrating little faults in his private character—quickness of temper, haughtiness of bearing, and the like—as if we were actually jealous of the fair fame of our friend now long dead.

And how little do we dwell upon the crowning quality of his great and noble nature; that which was of all others his characteristic—in the light of which Washington stands forth

alone in history—I mean the sense of *duty* to his country, which seems to have animated every public act of his career. Wherever he was sent, in whatever service, at war or in peace, he was equally *faithful*.

And it was not by small trials to his self-reliant and high spirit that he was tested and the temper of the true steel proved. From the time that he took command of the unprovided and disorderly army at Cambridge to the treaty of peace, his whole experience was a temptation to draw the power into his own hands. Congress neglected him and paid no heed to his advice; thwarted his plans, regarded him with jealousy; and alternately, in hours of panic, would have thrust authority upon him, as if in him alone was safety. His subordinate ignored his rank, and made his report directly to the President of Congress, from whom Washington first heard—accidentally as it were—of Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga. What military chief who had ever gone before him would so unhesitatingly have followed the path of duty? His work accomplished, whether as Soldier or Magistrate, the authority entrusted to him was at once surrendered to the State.

When Cæsar crossed the Rubicon; when Louis XIV. announced “L’Etat, c’est *moi* ;” when Peter of Russia remorselessly filled the swamps around the Neva with the bodies of his poor peasants—did any of them think of his *duty* to his country? Did Napoleon Bonaparte, who wished that his ashes might repose on the banks of the Seine among his French people whom he loved so much,\* but who nevertheless, without a decent pretext for war, took four hundred thousand of his “French people” to whiten with their bones the bloody Rus-

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\*See the inscription over his tomb at the Hotel des Invalides in Paris, quoted from his will, “ Je désire que mes cendres reposent sur les bords de la Seine, au milieu de ce peuple français que j’ ai tant aimé.”

sian snows? Of all the petty leaders of the Spanish American republics is there one who has the slightest claim to be called a Patriot?

So can we do better on Washington's Birthday than to turn our thoughts for a moment to this quality of the man in whom it was so striking? Why should we always talk about his truthfulness? (I really think a good many of you would have confessed about that cherry-tree.) Or tell how he was found at prayer? Prayer at that day was not so common as it is at this, and the best men were sadly careless about such matters, but Washington must have asked God's aid and comfort many times, or the one instance of which our history books tell the story would be worth little for our instruction.

I call your attention to the public character of Washington as animated by this great principle, because I think it is a principle too often forgotten, especially in a busy, money-making, republican country like ours. That of acknowledging and striving to act up to our duty to our country—to the Nation, State, and community in which we live. This is something more than patriotism, a word so often of late days perverted from its true meaning, and made a cloak for acts of the most unscrupulous tyranny. It is a principle which a young boy can understand, as well as the oldest man. My friends! is it not a proof how the busy affairs of life and the rough contact with the selfishness and the ridicule of the world, blunt our most innocent sentiments, that the boy is able to see the nobleness of the love that kept Horatius at the bridge, that took Curtius into the gulf, or Arnold Winklereid on the spears of the Austrians, without the cynical sneer, the conscious if not uttered thought, "What a fool he was! Silly enthusiast! why did he not stay at home and take care of his wife and children!"—which comes too often to all grown-up folks on

listening to such stories. Yet we know, even those of us who sneer, that these *were* NOBLE men; and that without men animated by such hearts, we should have no civilization now; no farm and counting-house and study to absorb our thoughts; no ease of home to make us glad—and sluggish. For counting-houses and studies, public libraries and literature, the Hall of Science and the Gallery of Art, are the outgrowth of order: they do not flourish among the natives of Mexico or Venezuela.

To make agriculture and trade, and the consequent prosperity which is necessary for literature and art, and the happiness and ease of real home possible, you must have firm and stable laws; and laws can never become firm and stable unless the men who originate them are inspired with a love for the right, a sense of *duty* to the Government, the fountain of the laws; who do not need the constant fear of hell before their eyes to make them obey.

Do you remember Lord Nelson's last signal, as his fleet was bearing down upon the French and Spaniards at the battle of Cape Trafalgar?—"England expects that every man will do his duty!" No wonder every man in the fleet did his best that day. Nelson's signal has become a watchword, famous as containing in itself the principle, the soundest and truest, which can animate the people of a country in their relations to their Government.

We acknowledge generally a duty to the Church in the performance of our religious services; to the family, in laboring for the support of those dependent upon us; and to ourselves, to refrain from vice and loose living; but we seldom think of the duty each one of us owes to the State, which, in the end, is the *same thing* as to his fellow-men at large. Now, if we admit this principle, and agree that we are bound by it,



is there not thrown on *us* a special duty? I mean as men who have been greatly favored by the opportunity of gaining for ourselves an education, better and more thorough than so many of those around us have been able to obtain.

The scholar knows more of the past experience of the world; he is more accustomed to bring the reasoning faculties to bear on any subject; less liable to be swayed by blind prejudice and popular passion than other men. His influence among his fellows, therefore, is vastly greater than that of the ignorant man. Say what any one will to the contrary, the educated man will always stand in the front rank. All experience shows it: I mean, of course, other things being equal. The ignorant man of natural force of character will rule where the timid man of culture will be despised; or if the scholar allows his tastes to lead him away from the company of his fellow-men into a dignified seclusion, his influence will soon be gone, for he will lose the power of sympathizing with other and rougher men. Men of like tastes and habits with himself will be all of the world that he can understand. But take two men of equal natural gifts, and an equal ambition and determination to lead, and it is almost uttering a truism to say that the one who knows most how to do it, will win. The influence for good or evil in the scholar is increased a hundredfold.

" For past experience tells in every soil,  
That those who think must govern those who toil."

It has been sometimes thought that the tendency of polite education is to weaken the natural brute courage of the mind, by making it more sensitive to rough-and-tumble contact with opposition. There may be some truth in this, but in the heart of the true gentlemen, how much more than counter-balanced is this sensitiveness by the courage which springs

from the sense of self-respect, the consciousness of the *shame* of cowardice, which only the man of refinement can truly feel.

The Spartan band who died with Leonidas at Thermopylæ probably loved their homes no more and no less than the Bœotians who ran away. Stern military discipline was no doubt the main cause of their fighting as they did; but we should lose one most striking feature of that immortal event, if we did not remember who the Three Hundred were—those men who, when hope was gone, and panic might well have overtaken the bravest hearts, faltered not for a moment—*Ἀνδρες*—"gentlemen"—*every one* of them; accustomed to despise the people of other states and the unwarlike class at home, and to look upon them as not only physically, but socially, their inferiors.

The French Royal Household Troops, composed altogether of men of gentle blood, whose terrific charge, with only sword in hand, upon the allied troops at Steinkirk, was so irresistible, and turned the fate of the day, gained their power from the same sentiment. The young English officers who were under fire for the first time, as the Russian shot and shell tore through their ranks on the slope above the Alma, or who, with less than 10,000 men, for three months besieged Delhi, defended by thoroughly armed and trained Sepoys, whose numbers gradually increased from 25,000 to 70,000, and finally took it by 'storm—these young men may have been greatly frightened when they first went into battle, but they dared not show it; and the world has almost come to believe that the body from which they spring does not know what fear is.

We hear it remarked every day, and truly, that no events in history show better how little the education of the scholar

unfits him for duty to his country, in the march and the battle. than the deeds of the German armies in their last two wars.

Do you remember the account which Alcibiades, as quoted by Plato, gives of Socrates, who was compelled to be a soldier for a time?—Socrates, the philosopher, the thinker, the wonderful reasoner; of all heathen men the best—I had almost said holy, for I really think he had the special grace of God with him. “When we were together in the campaign at Potræa,” says Alcibiades, “and I messed with him, I found that, in power of enduring toil, he surpassed not only me but all the soldiers in the camp.” Alcibiades goes on to tell how Socrates endured hunger without the least complaint, as well as the biting cold of a severe Macedonian winter. That his bravery was remarkable, and also his coolness, which Alcibiades especially noticed in the retreat from Delium, where Socrates, who was serving as an ordinary *hoplite*, or foot-soldier, never for a moment lost his nerve in the rush and throng.

But not only in the excitement of war need we look for examples by which to test the effect of education or man’s strength of heart. In the agony of disaster at sea, in the pestilent-stricken city, and in times when danger must be met calmly, without the relief which action gives: have the scholar and the man of refinement shown less power than others to control fear? Is not the courage of the physicians, who, at every season of fatal epidemic, step in to fill the places of their fellows who die on duty at the hospitals or in the district visiting, without a murmur, without delay or hesitation, of a higher order than the brute recklessness of the savage or the ruffian?

It is in combatting this sensitiveness to rude opposition, of which I spoke just now, that some of the occasions arise

where the *special* duty of the educated man to the community is seen. I mean, in not yielding to the cry of popular passion and ignorance. It is very trying to be called hard names by one's neighbors; to be by turns a "traitor," an "aristocrat," a "turncoat," or a "fossilized old fogey;" sneered at as "behind the times;" abused as heartless and selfish. I do not believe that the courage to resist such cries is one of our American virtues.

When you separate, and go your ways into the world, I doubt not each of you will, in course of time, find himself in positions where, as an educated, reasoning man, conscience will tell him that, if he will do his duty, he must lift up his voice in opposition to the majority of his neighbors. Especially is this likely to be the case with those of you who live in the country districts; and in the country it is the more trying, because you are generally on familiar terms with, and respected by, those around you. Popular rage will be aroused against some evil-doer, and would hunt him down without show of mercy; and woe betide your popularity if you get in the road then! You are no better than the villain's aider and abettor. Or, perhaps you are asked to sign a petition for the pardon of a criminal, who for some reason has obtained popular favor, but whom you know to be an intelligent and wilful knave, and who, you believe, ought, for every reason, to serve out his sentence. If you refuse, then, "Uncharitable and self-righteous Pharisee, judging and condemning as if your own pardon was sure at the Great Day,"—you will be pointed at as an example of how little "Christianity" your Church teaches. Or an occasion will occur when the political party to which you belong will have nominated a notoriously dishonest or unfit candidate for an office of trust; and if you want *to have the right to call yourself an honest man,*

you must vote against him. Do so, and you will surely be assailed with howls: "Turncoat, you want to go into politics, and get an office from the other side, when it gets in!"

But what said St. Peter once, under more trying circumstances? "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Or listen to the heathen Socrates, when the whole of Athens was beside itself with wrath at the neglect of the bodies of the dead by the generals who had conquered at Arginusæ, and illegally, in the Assembly of the people, the death of the accused was moved—listen to him raising his voice alone against the fifty other senators whose business it was to manage the prosecution, refusing to be a party to the illegal act. "Whether it be right in the sight of the gods to hearken unto you rather than the gods, judge ye; but as for me, I have sworn to obey the laws, and I will not forswear myself."

A hundred such instances occur in every man's experience. You have more knowledge than the men around you; your education gives you other and more ample means than they possess of forming your judgment in any matter; you see defects or advantages, where, to the mind less trained to think, they are not apparent. For example: Your country is bent on subscribing to a new railroad, and the farmers will put all their earnings into the stock. You are convinced, by figures and calculations, that it can never succeed. Or your town needs a new school house, for the children are all going to fall through the rotten floor some fine morning (which, to the poor, half-starved, under-paid teacher, will not be so distressing a calamity as might be supposed), and the tax-payers are too parsimonious to have a new one erected. Do you think that when you are looking for such results of ignorance and carelessness, knowing that they must happen—if you fold



your hands (and we do it; we, the "respectables" in America, will not believe that we *owe* a *bounden duty* of active service to the community!)—if, I say, you fold your hands, and are contented with saying to yourself or your intimate friend, "Farmer A. B. must look after his own business. I am not going to be a *Μάντις καζῶν*, and get the reputation of a "croaker" among the rest of the world;" or, "If we only had a Board of School Commissioners worth anything, that school house would have been put to rights long ago," do you think that you are fulfilling your duty to the State, to your fellow man, to God?"

Because the parties injured are not *your* family or *your* scholars, are *you* no more responsible than poor Pat, who works by the day in the street?

Remember the warning when the unexpected coming of the Master of the house is foretold: "For unto whom much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more."

Another branch of thought, part of the same subject, naturally arises from this contemplation of the influence which the educated man can exercise in the world. Since we can by our knowledge benefit our fellow-men, are we not bound to go on increasing that knowledge to the greatest extent for which God has given us the talent and the opportunity? That is part of our duty to the State.

Did it ever occur to you, young men, in reading the stories of the men who have become famous for inventions and discoveries in science and the mechanic arts, or of the great explorers who have opened up unknown quarters of the globe to commerce or settlement, how little has really been found out by accident, or accomplished quickly? The Frenchman, Papin, during the seventeenth century invented a vessel whose

motive force was steam, and the Marquis of Worcester, as is well known, constructed a steam-engine about the same period; but both inventions were so imperfect that no practical use could be made of them. A steamboat, arranged with a set of fixed blades, like Indian paddles, instead of side wheels, made the journey from Philadelphia to Burlington on the Delaware, several years before the famous trip of Fulton's "Clermont," on the Hudson, in 1807. Compare the first steam-engine set in motion by James Watt, in the factory at Glasgow, with the magnificent machinery which drives the propellor of a modern ocean steamer. Do you suppose that the latter is the first step beyond the former in the march of improvement? The intermediate stages have been almost innumerable. Watt himself through the whole of his life was adding to the capability and completeness of his machinery, taught by his own experience, and the careful study of his former efforts.

The Duke of Argyle, in the "Reign of Law," says: "The invention of the Fly-Shuttle in weaving, so early as 1733, seems to have given the first impulse to all that followed. By means of this invention, the power of weaving overtook the power of spinning. An adequate supply of yarn could not be procured under the ancient method of that most ancient industry. The time and the cost of collecting the products of so many scattered laborers, enhanced unduly the cost of manufacture, and even when the remuneration was reduced to the lowest point compatible with existence, that cost was still too high. Something was imperatively required to economize the work of human hands—some more elaborate contrivance to make that work go further than before. And so Hargreave's invention arose, not before the time (1765-7). And when his Spinning-Jenny had been invented, a still more

elaborate and powerful combination of mechanical adjustments was soon perfected in the hands of Arkwright (1769-71). When the Spinning-Frame was invented, and when Crompton's farther invention of the Mule Jenny speedily followed, (1787), the new order of things was fairly inaugurated."

To rise to a higher sphere of knowledge and usefulness. Compare the knowledge of medicine and surgery of to-day with that of two hundred and fifty years ago. If the modern physician had not the advantage of Harvey's discovery that the blood circulates, of Jenner's about vaccine, of that of the Jesuit Monks of Quito about the properties of the Peruvian bark; if the surgeon had to learn by his own dissecting-knife all that has been taught about Anatomy, would they succeed so well in saving life in this day of fashionable and legalized suicide?

Whatever real and lasting benefits mankind has received from such inventions and discoveries, have been the result of careful study by many minds, and the hard work and perseverance of many individuals. Not by blind, ignorant experiment, and search without fixed object—to get whatever may chance to be found or come in the way—has the Temple of Science been put together, like stones thrown in a heap. No! Only the wild Bushman would be content to worship at such a shrine. The builder whose work is to last, labors not as if he were alone in the Universe. The walls are erected on foundations already laid, and not elsewhere on the shifting sand. The arch rests upon its pillars and supports, and the superstructure upon the arches. To erect all parts true and firm, the former work, that of others, must be measured—carefully studied. Sometimes portions must be torn down and the materials thrown away. Then when foundations, walls, and all the careful subdivision of interior partitions have been built,



according to the plan, the roof can go on, completing the structure, adding only to its strength ; so that the people may go in and find shelter ; and while they admire the new adornments continually being added, wonder at the perfection of the great architect's design ; which all the stone-cutters, bricklayers, carpenters and carvers, have been laboring to carry out, each all the while intent only on his special work.

Study—real honest study—is never lost. Not till wild men in their frantic selfishness shall tear the States to pieces shall the buildings that the faithful workmen and wise overseers have erected for their fellow-men crumble and decay. For

“Shapes that come not at an earthly call  
Will not depart when mortal voices bid.”

One thing more. Because you and I are not great scholars ; because we feel ourselves to be very ordinary men, of no profound abilities, do not let any of us cease to try to come as near the standard of the Perfect Man as may be. Every one can do something in the world. The union of many small forces will accomplish all that can be done by a great power. The discipline of the many combined is often worth more than the genius of the few.

“Think naught a trifle, though it small appear :  
Small sands the mountain, moments make the year,”

We all know—those of us at least who have grown to manhood—how wrongly schoolboys often estimate each others' worth. The master, or older friend, thinks well of George. George is a steady fellow. He stands pretty well in his class, though he has to work for it. He is a fair swimmer and cricketer, and when on his metal can walk to Trenton without being tired out. The master likes to see all this. He secretly looks upon George as one of the very best young men in the class, and is sure he will do well in life. The boys are doubt-

ful. "George is a very good sort of fellow," my young brother or cousin tells me, "but he is too slow; he has nothing brilliant about him. He knows his lessons, but he has to dig like a Coolie at them. He often loses his wicket for a 'goose egg' when the bowling is good; pants hard when he gets to the Pennsylvania shore, and can't walk to Trenton in twice the time that it takes Louis to do it." Louis, he tells me, "is a real smart fellow. He can get through his Homer in no time—when he tries. If he chose to study he could stand first all the time—he *doesn't* always try. Then he is so splendid physically. He is a dead shot, strong as an ox, and can walk almost like Weston. He hasn't walked much this year; he is rather lazy, and smokes a good deal." Well!—George, we all think in after years, has turned out to have a good many of the qualities of his namesake, the Father of his Country. Louis, I hear a good deal of. He makes very good stories out of his adventure with the Gensdarmes at the Theatre in Paris, and the duel which grew out of the students' scuffle on the Rhine steamboat. His articles published in San Francisco, on life among the Chinese on the C. P. Railroad, were certainly interesting, and the anonymous articles on both sides of the question which he wrote for the New York "Republican" and "Democrat," respectively, very "spicey;" but when I met him the other day there was an excitement about his eye, and a bloated look in his face, and his hand trembled as he shook mine, in a way I was very sorry to see.

Why boys! If any one of you were Captain in a tight match, would you rather command a good fair nine, where right and left field, the men on the bases and catcher, all stood up to their work and made no bad mistakes, even if the pitcher was not worth much; or a nine which hardly ever played, with but one magnificent batsman, who made a "home run" nearly

every game he took part in? Or would you rather have a good steady four-oar crew on the river—all evenly matched—or one with a first-rate stroke, and the other three men so weak that the stroke could pull them *all* round if he tried?

No! Let every one of us do his best. If that best never works wonders, at any rate we shall be obeying the will of Our Father and Master. His command will apply as well to all the services we can render as to the money we give. "If thou hast much give plenteously. If thou hast little, do thy diligence gladly to give of that little," for "God loveth a cheerful giver." Remember the condemnation of the slothful servant who did not make use of his one talent.

America, as well as England, expects that every man will do his duty, without fear—to the best of his ability. Then, if she does not call in vain, she shall not need a Cæsar or a Napoleon to snatch the reins of the Car of State, and control the wild horses dragging it into the surging flood of Anarchy. Then Reform will have taken place already. The bright example of the Father of his Country will not have been all in vain.

Let each of us do his best. I speak particularly to you boys. His best in the station of life to which it has pleased God to call him. At home, at school, and in the play-ground; at college, and, as we grow to manhood, in the business of life. Not neglecting small duties and opportunities while waiting for great chances of usefulness to occur, but *whatever* our hands find to do, doing with our might. Our Church needs us; our country greatly needs the best duty and service of all of us young men. Things have gone so sadly wrong around us, and the landscape looks so gloomy, that our elders are often sick at heart, and I fear have almost lost their courage; but we can bring fresh energy and the strength of youth

to the battle. Let us press onward without faltering when we know we are in the true path, with firmness, as our President Lincoln said, in the right as God gives us to see the right. But when we hear others complain that the times are altogether evil; that virtue is passing from the earth; that there is no honesty in men nor reverence in youth; shall we shake our heads, join in the moan and accuse our fellow-men? Are *we* in no respect to blame for the evil? Let us look into ourselves

"Search thine own heart; what paineth thee  
In others, in thyself may be.  
All dust is frail; all flesh is weak;  
Be *thou* the true man thou dost seek."